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MAY-JUNE, 1890.

NO. 3.

# BIBLIOTHECA PLATONICA

An Exponent of the Platonic Philosophy.

EDITED BY

THOS. M. JOHNSON.



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OSCEOLA, MO., U. S. A.

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Single copies, 75 cents (3s.).

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Subscriptions are payable in advance, or on receipt of first number.

No subscriptions received for less than one year.

Address all subscriptions, contributions and communications to the Editor.

THOMAS M. JOHNSON,  
Quacala, St. Clair Co., Mo., U. S. A.

# THE LATER PLATONISTS.

By *Alfred F. Johnson*.

In the earlier centuries of the present era, there rose a school of philosophers at the city of Alexandria, whose dogmas and speculations have pervaded more or less the highest religious sentiment of the modern world. It was their aim not so much to create a new party in metaphysical thought as to set forth a central principle of truth, and bring to it in their proper order and relations all the sublimest studies and percepts existing in the various religious and philosophic systems of the different regions of the earth. They drew alike from Persian and Hindoo, Greek and Egyptian, ancient faith and recent doctrine, desirous to secure the choicest treasures of each. Regarding knowledge as the noblest possession of the soul, and veneration as the key to its profoundest mysteries, they inculcated worship and contemplation as the most vital and essential methods to attain a true life. Giving to teachers the honor and consideration which were their due, they exalted the interior life and the intuitive faculty to the superior place in their regard. We accordingly find enthusiasm, mystic revery, and an aspiration after the superior nature, as well as scholastic disquisition and mathematical learning. Truth, and not its oracles or its expounders, constituted their foremost ambition.

Very properly, the new doctrine was first enunciated in Alexandria. The older focuses of philosophic



thought had parted with their fire and illumination. Ionic speculation had passed from Asia to Athens, where after centuries of glorious splendor it had died away into a verbose scholasticism and lifeless ethic. Meanwhile the new metropolis of Alexandria drew to it sages and men of letters from all parts of the known world. The various schools and sects of philosophy had also their representatives from India, Persia, Asia Minor and Greece, as well as Egypt itself.

It was not wonderful that thoughtful men began to entertain the conviction that the strife of words ought to cease, and believed it possible to develop one harmonious system in the different teachings. There did come forth attempts to establish such a system. Pot-Amon, living in the time of the Ptolemies, endeavored with some success to combine the Platonists with the more popular disciples of Aristotle. Judæan writers tried to show that philosophy had been originally taken from their literature. Aristobulos asserted that the Ethics of Aristotle were derived from the Law of Moses; and Philo interpreted the *Fentateuch* so as to accord with the doctrines of Pythagoras and the Akademeia. In time Christianity was also taught at Alexandria under the designation of "the Gnosis" or superior knowledge. The philosopher Pythagoras had employed this title for his doctrines. Clement, Athenagoras and others, now known as Christians, then were designated by the name of *Gnostics*, or seekers after knowledge; and several teachers incorporated, in one form or other, the newer tenets with the older doctrine.

In the first years of the third century of our era, Ammonios Sakkas began to teach at Alexandria. His rare learning, spiritual endowments and mental exaltation won for him the name of *Theodidaktos* or God-taught; but he followed the modest example of Pythagoras, and only assumed the title of *Philaletheian*, or friend of Truth. His followers were sometimes called *Analogetikoi*; probably from their habit of often interpreting the sacred writings, legends,

naratives, myths and mystic dramas, by the principle of analogy or correspondence, making events that were described as having occurred in the external world to relate solely or principally to operations and experiences of the human soul. In subsequent time, however, they were termed *Eclectics*, because many of their doctrines had been culled from different philosophic systems. It was the aim of Ammonios to overlook the incongruous elements which he regarded as artificial accretions, and to retain everything in all faiths and speculations, that was really useful.

It is not easy to state with exactness what were the doctrines of the Philaletheians. Formulas of belief were not common then, as they unfortunately have since become. Like Orpheus, Pythagoras, Konfucius Gautama, and Sokrates, the modest Ammonios committed nothing to writing. He is known to us only through his disciples, in whose utterances we may trace somewhat of his opinions and methods. He followed the ancient example, and inculcated moral truths in his auditors, while he communicated his more important doctrines to persons duly initiated and disciplined. What he taught we know partly from a few treatises of his friends that have escaped destruction, and more generally from the assertions of his adversaries.

This method of dividing all doctrine into public and esoteric was formerly universal. In the Mysteries an oath was required from neophytes and catechumens not to divulge what they had learned. The philosopher Pythagoras classified his teachings as exoteric and esoteric. The Essenes were said to have made similar distinctions, dividing their adherents into neophytes, the Brothers and the Perfect. It is also recorded of Jesus that he "spoke the word" in parables or allegory to the multitude. "But without a parable spoke he not to them; and when they were alone he expounded everything to his disciples. (Mark IV., 33,34). The reason for this is suggested by the aphorism:

"Give not that which is holy to the dogs,  
Nor cast your pearls before the swine;  
Lest perhaps the swine should tread the pearls under their feet  
And the dogs should turn and rend you.

—Mathew VII., 6.

Among the disciples of Ammonios were Plotinos, Origenes, and Longinus. They were sworn to secrecy as to the unwritten doctrines, but Erennios, one of the initiated number, dissolved the agreement, and Origenes disclosed them in a treatise which was afterward lost.

It was left for Plotinos to take up the work, in a manner fitting to its importance. Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, in her celebrated work on *Religious Ideas*, has represented him as the founder of the school of New Platonists. Augustin also described him as a resuscitated Plato. He accompanied the army of Gordian to the East, for the purpose of learning, like Apollonios of Tyana, from the sages of Upper Asia and perhaps India. The death of the Emperor and the failure of the expedition arrested the execution of this purpose; but we find in his teachings many things apparently taken from the Sankhya philosophy and the Yoga doctrine of Patanjali. Of Origenes but little is known. Longinus traveled for many years, finally making his abode at Palmyra. Here he became the counsellor of the famous Queen Zenobia. After her capture at Emesa, she sought to propitiate Aurelian's favor by charging her hostility to the Romans upon Longinus, who was accordingly put to death. He left several works which were destroyed. His *Treatise upon Sublimity*, however, still remains.

Porphyry, or Malech, was a Tyrian by birth, but translated his name into Greek as had been more or less fashionable since the time of Antiochos Epiphanes. He became the disciple of Plotinos and principal of the Alexandrian school. Both he and Plotinos spent several years at Rome, when political disturbances rendered the Egyptian metropolis unfit for a philosophic resort. The latter here endeavored to establish a city in Italy upon the plan of the "Republic" of Plato,

—apparently forgetting that the great philosopher was writing according to ancient practice in allegory, and had explicitly declared that the state which he had described existed only in his discourse, and its model was in heaven and had no existence in the earth. (*Republic* IX. 13). Porphyry was more a man of the time than his master. He was a scholar of much merit, and made additions to the new school from the ancient Egyptian philosophy. He collected the discourses of Plotinos, and wrote many books of his own, some scientific, some historic, and others of a philosophic character,—one of them being an allegoric interpretation of the works of Homer. He was regarded as the leading expositor of the New Platonism; and after the proscription of his doctrines in the next century, all who had his books were required to deliver them up to be burned, under penalty of death.

Iamblichos, or Ia-maleich, was a Syrian, thoroughly conversant with the Magian doctrines as well as the Egyptian mythology. He was a scholar and a sage as well as a mantic and expounder of the secret meaning of the Mystic or Perfective Rites. His lecture-room was thronged from Greece and Syria, and the Emperor Julian prized him as one of the greatest of teachers. His work upon the *Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians*, is perhaps the most valuable text-book of the Neo-Platonic doctrines extant. Thomas Taylor translated it in 1820, and a second rendering of it was made by the writer and published in *THE PLATONIST*.

Sopator succeeded Iamblichos as the teacher of Philosophy at Alexandria, and was honored by the title of "Plato's Successor." He enjoyed the friendship of the Emperor Constantine, and at his request performed the rites of consecration of the new Rome. When, however, the Emperor had killed his son he applied to the philosopher to be purified, after the archaic notion, from blood-guiltiness; to which Sopator replied that he knew of no rite which could absolve a man from such an act. The Emperor, who

had been a "Soldier of Mithras," forsook that religion and put the philosopher to death. The school was then for a time closed by imperial order.

From this time the existence of the school was more or less precarious. Except during the brief reign of the Emperor Julian, it enjoyed no favor at the Imperial Court; and under the Emperor Theodosios was interdicted outright. The great library at Alexandria was destroyed by the bishop Theophilos. At his death his nephew Kyrillos obtained the episcopal office by the purchased favor of a woman of the court, followed by a pitched battle in the streets of Alexandria. Hypatia was now the lecturer at the Musaeum. She taught a purer Platonic doctrine than her predecessors, and filled ably and worthily the chair of Ammonios and Plotinos. The dominant party was enraged at her popularity, and, with the countenance of the prelate, she was attacked by a mob in the street, dragged to a church and there murdered under circumstances of peculiar atrocity.

Nevertheless, a few more lights appeared in the philosophic constellation. A branch of the school was planted at Athens by Syrianos, where Proklos became its chief luminary. Olympiodoros remained at Alexandria, where he endeavored to substitute the Aristotelian doctrines in place of the Platonic. His treatise on Alchemy is in manuscript in Paris. Proklos was long a student under him, but presently removed to Athens and attached himself to Syrianos. He made the bold attempt to assimilate the old rites with the later philosophies, and to put a new face upon religion. He concentrated the history of Philosophy into this brief aphorism: "What Orpheus delivered in arcane allegories Pythagoras learned when he was initiated into the Mysteries; and Plato next received the knowledge of them from the Orphic and Pythagorean writings." This statement harmonises with the declaration of Herodotos: "The Perfective Rites called Orphic and Bacchic are in reality Egyptian and Pythagorean." They doubtless were; but Bacchos was an

Assyrian and Aethiopic divinity, and his worship and whatever philosophic notions pertained to them were at a prior time derived from the Far East. Proklos, taking the primitive unity of religions and philosophies for his point of beginning, wrote several books in which he wrought the current beliefs of his age into a coherent and somewhat complicated system.

Other teachers of ability and merit taught at Alexandria. The conflicts which rent Egyptian Christianity like the child possessed by a demon, afforded a breathing-spell to the men of learning. It was, however, precarious. Hierokles restored Platonic teaching to much of its genuineness. His zeal and enthusiasm drew upon him the attention of persecutors, and he was sent a prisoner to Constantinople to be punished. There he was cruelly tortured, but bore it courageously. He was scourged and banished, but soon afterward returned to Alexandria and taught openly as before. He is the writer who has made Scholastikos the schoolman immortal as the prince of blunderers, and his *Facetiae* are still admired. He was a true Neo-Platonist, critically weighing Plato and Aristotle, but at the same time esteeming Ammonios Sakkas as their equal. "Paganism never wears so fair a dress," says Samuel Sharpe, "as in the writings of Hierocles; his *Commentary* on the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras is full of the loftiest and purest morality; and not less agreeable are the fragments that remain of his writings upon our duties, and his beautiful chapter on the pleasures of married life."

The Emperor Justinian finally closed the schools at Athens and Alexandria. At that time Isidoros and Salustios were teachers in Egypt, while Zenodotos and Damaskios were in charge at Athens. The philosophers, justly apprehending cruel treatment, withdrew into the Persian dominions, where they received a cordial hospitality. This was the end of liberal thought and learning in the Roman Empire, and the twilight of the Dark Ages was begun.

For a time it had appeared as though the entire

Roman world would accept their doctrines. The doctrines of Zoroaster had been introduced into Rome about seventy years before the present era, and extended to the furthest boundaries of the Empire, superseding in a great degree the former divinities. The Emperors from Antoninus and Alexander Severus to Constantine and Julian had embraced them, and even been initiated, many of them, into the Secret Rites, to which Porphyry and others of the philosophers had also conformed. Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr and others now recognized as Christian Fathers were designated as Gnostics, and combined their doctrines with their peculiar theology so intimately that they have never been completely eliminated. The birthday of Mithras, the twenty-fifth of December, was set apart also for Christmas; and the divinity himself was declared to be identical with the Christian Son of God,—“the Ray of His Glory and express image of his substance.” (*Epistle to the Hebrews* 1.3; AUGUSTIN: *Discourse on the Gospel of John* 1. vii.). The political revolutions of the empire, and the ambition of Prelates, however, rendered this harmony impossible. The worship and Perfective Rites were proscribed thenceforth and in the later ages as magic and witchcraft; and the teaching of philosophy was prohibited.

Mr. Robert Brown, Jun., though sincerely admiring Plato, yet very emphatically rejects the Eclectic Neo-Platonism, declaring it “something entirely different from the philosophical idea of Plato and the Hellenes.” After enumerating the several teachers, from Ammonios to Simplicios, he names Thomas Taylor “the last but possibly not the least of the school.” He does not seem to be willing to give the smallest consideration to their methods in the interpreting of the arcane and ancient learning. It is possible that they did carry the practice of allegorising to an extreme. Clement, Origen, and even the Apostle Paul, did the same thing. The rejecting of them and their methods, however, is as extreme in the other

direction. We may not in candor discard them so utterly, because their elaborate spirituality of thought seems so utterly opposed to the materialistic canons of modern ages.

The Neo-Platonists, after a century of persecution and proscription, disappeared from public view. Noble men they were, and worthy of respectful mention. They had grappled with the mightiest problems of thought with admirable acuteness and sagacity. They were the statesmen of their period, and they hallowed the philosophy of their time by making it religious. Neo-Platonism voiced and represented the purest and noblest aspirations of the time in which it flourished; and neither morally nor intellectually was it a failure.

It may be well, after this delineating of the history of the school, to remark something about its aims and doctrines. The various teachers of New Platonism developed it after their own genius, and very naturally in forms somewhat different. Holmes' comparison very aptly illustrates this: "Iron is essentially the same everywhere and always; but the sulphate of iron is never the same as the carbonate of iron. Truth is invariable; but the *Smithate* of truth must always differ from the *Brownate* of truth." Platonism, from the first, was not a system, but more characteristically a method. It consisted of radiations from a cognised centre; every follower carrying it into detail after his own habitude and genius. It was essentially a spiritual liberty, the outcome of a life, and not a matter of metes and bounds, or a creed of formulated doctrine. Ammonios Sakkas aimed to reconcile all sects and peoples under this common principle, to induce them to lay aside their contentions and quarrels, and unite together as a single family, the children of a common mother.

Mosheim, the ecclesiastical historian, has given the most impartial account of the cherished purposes of this distinguished man. "Ammonios, conceiving that not only the philosophers of Greece, but also all



those of the different barbarous nations, were perfectly in unison with each other in regard to every essential point, made it his business so to temper and expound the tenets of all these sects, as to make it appear that they had all of them originated from one and the same source, and all tended to one and the same end."

The religious rites and beliefs were also set forth as pertaining to a common principle, and only at fault as having been adulterated with foreign and incongruous elements. He taught, says Mosheim, that "the religion of the multitude went hand in hand with Philosophy, and with her had shared the fate of being by degrees corrupted and obscured by human conceits, superstition and lies; that it ought therefore to be brought back to its original purity by purging it of this dross and expounding it upon philosophical principles; and that the whole purpose which Christ had in view was to reinstate and restore to its primitive integrity the Wisdom of the ancients—to reduce within bounds the universally-prevailing dominion of superstition—and in part to correct and in part to exterminate the various errors that had found their way into the different popular religions."

It is certain that there was in every country having claims to enlightenment an esoteric doctrine, denominated *Wisdom* or knowledge,\* and those devoted to its prosecution were styled sages or "the wise." Pythagoras and Plato after him chose the more modest designation of *philosophers*, or lovers of wis-

\*The writings extant in ancient times often personified Wisdom as the emanation, manifestation and associate of the one Supreme Being. We thus have Buddha in India, Nebo in Assyria, Thoth in Egypt, Hermes in Greece,—also the female divinities Neitha, Metis, Athena, and the Gnostic potency Achamoth or Sophia. Hence they deduced the personality of her son Chrestos, or the oracular. The first verses of the Johannean Gospel, as if following after Philo, give this summary: "In the Beginning or First Principle was the Logos or Word, and the Word was aduate to God, and God was the Logos." The Samaritan *Pentateuch* denominated the book of *Genesis Achamanth* or wisdom, and two old treatises by Alexandrian Jews, *the Wisdom of Solomon* and *the Wisdom of Jesus*, are named with reference to the same truth. The book of *Masbali*, the Discourses or proverbs of Solomon, is of the same character and personifies wisdom as the emanation and auxiliary of the Divinity:

dom, and their studies were accordingly termed philosophy as denoting the pursuit of the superior knowledge, rather than unqualifiedly the knowledge itself. Pythagoras named it *ὁ γνῶσις τῶν ὀντων*,—the gnosis or knowledge of the things that really are. Under this noble designation the ancient teachers,—sages, seers, magians, hierophants, prophets and philosophers—included all knowledge which they considered as essentially divine; part of it being esoteric and for the erudite and initiated alone, and part as suitable for the many. The Hebrew Rabbis employed a like distinction. They denominated the sacred literature *rechab* or *merchaba*, as being the vehicle of divine truth, and the scribes or teachers were graphically denominated “Sons of Rechab” or Rechabites. Theology, religious worship, vaticination, music, astronomy, the healing art, morals and statecraft were included under the one head.

“Yava possessed me, prior to his going forth  
The first of his emanations, from the time—  
I proceeded from antiquity—the beginning—  
The earliest times of the earth.”

Thus Ammonios found a work ready for his hand. His deep intuition, his extensive learning, his familiarity with the most erudite philosophers of the time, and with the Christian Gnostic teachers, Pantaeon, Clement and Athenagoras, helped him in fitting himself for the work which he afterward performed so thoroughly. He drew to himself the greatest scholars and public men of the Roman Empire, men with little taste for wasting time in elaborate sophistries, or superstitious observances.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* gives this summary of the purpose and doctrines of the great Philaletheian:

He adopted the doctrines which were received in Egypt concerning the Universe and the Deity considered as constituting one great Whole; concerning the eternity of the world, the nature of souls, the empire of Providence, and the government of the world by demons. He also established a system of moral discipline which allowed the people in general to live according to the laws of their country and the dictates of nature; but required the Wise to exalt their minds by contemplation and to mortify the body, so that they might be ca-

pable of enjoying the presence and assistance of the demons, [*frohaits*, or spiritual essences], and ascending after death to the presence of the Supreme Parent. In order to reconcile the popular religions, and particularly the Christian, with this new system, *he made the whole history of the heathen gods an allegory*, maintaining that they were only celestial ministers, entitled to an inferior kind of worship; and he acknowledged that Jesus Christ was an excellent man and the friend of God, but alleged that it was not his design entirely to abolish the worship of demons, and that his only intention was to purify the ancient religion."

A peculiarity in his methods, was the dividing of his disciples after the manner of the Pythagorean School and ancient Mysteries into neophytes, initiates and masters. He obligated them by oath not to divulge the more recondite doctrines except to those who had been thoroughly instructed and disciplined. The significance of this injunction can easily be apprehended when we call to mind that the great production of Plato, *the Republic*, is often misrepresented by superficial expositors and others wilfully ignorant, as describing an ideal state of society analogous to the sensual paradise ascribed to the *Koran*. That the work should be interpreted esoterically is apparent to every appreciative reader.

Even the Hebrew Scriptures were formerly understood as allegoric. The story of Abraham, his sons and their mothers, was of this nature. (*Galatians*, iv. 22-24). Josephus declares that Moses spake certain things wisely, but enigmatically, and others under a decent allegory," calling this method "philosophic." Maimonides distinctly cautions us against making known the actual meaning:

"Whoever shall find out the true sense of the book of *Genesis* ought to take care not to divulge it. This is a maxim which all our learned men repeat to us—and above all respecting the work of the six days. If a person shall discover the true meaning of it by himself or by the aid of another,—then he ought to be silent; or, if he speaks of it, he ought to speak of it but obscurely, and in an enigmatic manner, as I do myself, *leaving the rest to be guessed by those who can understand me.*"

Well, therefore, can we understand the distinction between the perfect and the multitude, as made in ancient times, "To you it is given," says Jesus to the Apostles, "to understand the arcana, but to the multitude it is not given; therefore I speak to them in

parables and similitudes, that they may see and not perceive, hear and not understand."

Modern writers have commented, often erroneously, upon the peculiar sentiments and methods of the Neo-Platonists. Indeed the immense difference in the nature of ancient and modern learning has, to a very great degree, unfitted students of later times for understanding the principles of the old theosophy. Even the enthusiasm which is considered as religious fervor akin to divine inspiration, has not much in common with the entheasm of the old philosophers.

The system of the Alexandreian school was comprised in three primary tenets: its theory of the Godhead, its doctrine of the soul, and its spiritualism or theurgy. Plotinos declared Divinity to be essentially ONE; that the Universe is not God nor part of God; nevertheless it has its existence from his mind, derives from him its life, and is incapable of being separated from him. "The end of the Egyptian rites and Mysteries," says Plutarch, "was the knowledge of the One God, who is the Lord of all things, and to be discerned only by the soul. Their theosophy had two meanings: the one, sacred and symbolic; and the other, popular and literal. The figures of animals which abounded in their temples, and which they were supposed to worship, were only so many hieroglyphics to represent the divine qualities."

Sir William Jones, in his lecture upon the Persians, presents the cardinal doctrine of the Sufis as well as the Zoroastrians, which equally well applies to Ammonios and his successors:

"The primeval religion of Iran, if we may rely upon the authorities adduced by Mohsani Fani (a Sufi), was that which Newton calls the oldest, and it may justly be called the noblest, of all religions: a firm belief that 'one Supreme God made this world by his power and continually governed it by his providence;—a pious fear, love and adoration of him, and due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole human species; and a compassionate tenderness, even for the brute creation.'"

The fundamental doctrine of the Neoplatonists, as of the Egyptians, Chaldaeans, and all philosophers, was that of a single Supreme Essence. This is the

*Dyu-pitr* or Father in heaven of the Aryan peoples,—identical with the *Yav* or Iao of the Chaldaeans, the *Iabe* of the Samaritans, the *Tiu* or *Tuisco* of the Northmen, the *Duo* of the Britons, the *Zeus* of the Hellenic peoples—the Being, one and Supreme. From him all other beings proceeded by *emanation*. Modern *savants* are substituting for this their theories of *evolution*. Perhaps a profounder sage will show these hypotheses, now apparently so contradictory, to be but forms of the one underlying fact,—Divinity is fundamental Being, and creation is existent solely as proceeding from Being and constantly sustained by it.

All the ancient theosophies contained the tenet that *θεοὶ* gods or disposers, angels, daemons, and other spiritual essences emanated from the Supreme Being. Ammonios accepted the doctrine of the *Books* of Hermes, that from the Divine All proceeded the Divine Wisdom or Amon; that from Wisdom proceeded the Creator or Demiurgos; and from the Creator the subordinate spiritual beings,—the world and its inhabitants being the last. The first is immanent in the second, the second in the third, and so on through the entire series.

The worship of these subordinate beings constituted the *idolatry* charged upon the ancients—an imputation not deserved by the philosophers who recognized but one Supreme Being, and professed to understand the *hyponoia* or under meaning in regard to angels, daemons, heroes and symbolic representations. An old philosopher justly remarked: "The gods exist, but they are not what the many suppose them to be. He is not an atheist who denies the existence of the gods whom the multitude worship; but he is one who fastens on these gods the notions of the multitude." Aristotle is more explicit: "The divine essence pervades the whole world of nature; what are styled the *gods*\* are only the first principles. The

\*Prof Tayler Lewis considered this term as virtually synonymous with *godhead*.

myths and stories were devised to make the religious systems intelligible and attractive to the people, who otherwise would not give them any regard or veneration."

Thus the stories of Zeus or Jupiter, the Siege of Troy, the Wanderings of Odysseus, the Adventures of Herakles and Theseus, were but mystic tales which had their appropriate under meaning. The various old worships indicate the existence of a theosophy anterior to them. "All men yearn after gods," says Homer.

"The key that is to open one must open all; otherwise it cannot be the right key."

The Alexandreian Philosophers accepted these doctrines substantially, the principal difference being in modes of expression. It was no attempt to oppose Christianity or to resuscitate Paganism, as Lloyd, Mosheim, Kingsley and others so strenuously represent; but to extract from all their most valuable treasures, and not resting there, to make new investigations. They taught, like all the old sages, that all beings and things proceeded from the source of existence in series, or discrete degrees of emanation. "There are four orders," Iamblichos taught—"gods, daemons, heroes and souls." His theosophy agrees in this respect with the doctrine of Paul, that "all things came out from God," and corroborates the declaration of Jesus that "the kingdom of God is immanent within."

Of course there is no avatar. The human soul itself is the offspring or emanation of the Divinity, and the whole philosophic discipline is for the purpose of developing and perfecting its divine faculties. The highest spiritual development, both in perceptive and subjective qualities, was contemplated. Plotinos taught that as the soul came out from God, there was immanent within it an impulse to return, which attracted it inward toward its origin and centre, the Eternal Good. The person who does not understand how the soul contains the most excellent within itself will seek by laborious effort to realise it from without.

On the other hand the one who is truly wise cognises it within himself, develops the ideal by withdrawal into himself, concentrating his attention, and so floating upward toward the Divine Fountain, the stream of which flows within him. The Infinite is not known through the reasoning faculty, which makes distinctions and defines, but by the superior Intellect (*nous* or *episteme*)—by entering upon a state in which the individual, so to speak, is no more his own mere finite selfhood; in which state divine essence is shared by him. This state Plotinos denominates ECSTASY—the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, and so becoming at one with the Infinite.

It has been affirmed and denied that this doctrine of ecstasy and oneness was before promulgated by Numenius, and it has been compared to the Yoga or union philosophy of Patanjali, and even to the *Iravaya* of the Buddhists.

The exalted condition which Plotinos describes is, however, not permanent, but only enjoyed at intervals; and its attainment is promoted to a certain extent by physical means, as by abstinence which tends to clarify and exalt the mental perceptivity. The moral agencies which prepare the individual for this superior condition and habitude are given as love of excellence for the poet, devotion to knowledge for the philosopher, love and prayer for the devout.

Plotinos, it is recorded, was of an exalted spiritual nature and pure in life and motive. He was accordingly enabled to realize this superior condition six times during his life. Porphyry also declares that Apollonios of Tyana was thus "united to Divinity" four times, and he himself once, after he had attained the age of sixty.

The outflowing from Divinity was received by the human spirit in unreserved abundance,\* accomplishing for the soul a union with the Divine, and enabling it, while in the body, to be a partaker of the life which is not of the body.

\**John* III. 34. "God giveth not his spirit by measure."

Closely allied to this is the doctrine of mental and moral exaltation, as set forth in the *New Testament*. The *metanoia* which is there inculcated is no mere penance, repentance or contrition for wrong, but an energising of the spiritual and intellective principle of our nature, which eliminates the rule of lower motive, so that we live and are inspired from above. It is a higher perception,\* transcending the *dianoia* or composite understanding which is influenced by mental processes, and accordingly is an infilling, a *pleroma*, and inspiring of the *whole* life from the divine constituents of our being.

Prayer, as Plato explains it, affords the true preparation for this higher spiritual condition, and the petition in the *Phaedrus* is in apt illustration.† “Prayer,” he declares, “is the ardent turning of the soul toward God—not to ask for any particular good, but for good itself,—the universal supreme good. We often mistake what is pernicious and dangerous for what is useful and desirable,” he further remarks. “Therefore remain silent in the presence of the divine ones, till they remove the clouds from thy eyes and enable thee to see by the light which issues from themselves, not what appears as good to thee, but what is really good.”

Plotinos also taught that every person has the faculty of intuition or intellection. This is the same notion as enunciated by Plato, that the idea of the good sheds on objects the light of truth, and gives to the soul that knows the power of knowing. The

\*This is the proper translation of the Greek term. All words compounded with the preposition *meta* involve the idea of participation—the lower quality or principle being exalted by communion with the higher, and so becoming transmuted into its nature. Thus *metempsychosis* is the progress of the soul into superior conditions; *metaphysic* the growth and hence the science of Supernal being. Even the *metamelos* of Judas Iskariotes was not mere remorse, but the rousing of concern for the just and right.

†SOKRATES.—“Beloved Pan, and all ye divine ones about this place, grant that I may be good in the inner nature, and that what I have of external things may be accordant with those within. May I deem the wise man the truly rich, and let me have only such an amount of gold as only a provident man may possess or use.”



higher soul is even when linked to the body a dweller in the eternal world, and has a nature kindred to Divinity. It is enabled therefore to perceive and apprehend actual and absolute fact more perfectly than through the medium of the reasoning faculties and external senses.

"Everything in the world of Nature is not held fast by Fate," Iamblichos declares.\* "On the contrary there is another principle of the Soul superior to all that is born or begotten, through which we are enabled to attain union with superior natures, rise above the established order of the universe, and participate in the life aeternal and the energies of the heavenly ones. Through this principle we are able to set ourselves free. For when the better qualities in us are active, and the soul is led again to the natures superior to itself, then it becomes separated from everything that held it fast to the world-life, stands aloof from inferior natures, exchanges this for the other life, abandons entirely the former order of things, and gives itself to the other."

We begin with instinct; the end is omniscience. It is a direct beholding; what Schelling denominates a realisation of the subjective and objective in the individual which blends him with that identity of subjective and objective called Divinity; so that, transported out of himself, so to speak, he thinks divine thoughts, views things from their highest point of view, and, to use an expression of Emerson's, "becomes recipient of the soul of the world." Plato describes the matter more forcibly "The light and spirit of the Deity are as wings to the soul, raising it into communion with himself, and above the earth with which the mind is prone to bemire itself." (*Phaidros*.) "To be like God is to be holy, just and wise. .... This is the end for which man was born, and should be his aim in the pursuit of the superior knowledge." (*Theaitetos*).

The power of seeing beyond the common phy-

\**Mysteries*, Part VIII. 7., Wilder's Translation, 1887.

sical sense, as in vaticination or "second sight," was possessed by many of these men. Apollonios of Tyana describes the faculty as possessed and exercised by himself:

"I can see the Present and the Future in a clear mirror. The Sage need not wait for the vapors of the earth and the corrupt condition of the air to enable him to foresee plagues and fevers; he ought to know them later than God but earlier than the multitude. The divine natures see the future; common men, the present; sages, that which is about to take place. My peculiar abstemious mode of living produces such an acuteness of the senses, or else it brings into activity some other faculty, so that the greatest and most remarkable things may be performed."

This peculiar gift or faculty is probably to be explained in this way: It is not created anew, but brought out of a dormant condition. The miraculous effects of abstemiousness to produce extraordinary spiritual acuteness have often been noticed. Gorging, and indulgence in drink, or the using of gross and unwholesome food close up the interior faculties. It will be borne in mind that many of the distinguished teachers and sages were more or less ascetic. Yet all that abstinence can do is to remove obstacles to the free action of the mind; it can produce no faculty or quality that does not already exist.

There is what may be termed spiritual photography. The soul is the camera in which facts and events, future, past and present, are alike fixed; and the higher perceptivity makes the understanding conscious of them. Beyond an every-day world of limits, all is as one day or state—the past and the future comprised in the present. Probably this is the "great day," the "last day," "the day of the Lord" of the writers in the *New Testament*—the eternal day without beginning or ending, in which every one now is in his interior spirit, and into which every one passes by death or *ecstasis*. The soul is then freed from the constraint of the body, and its noble part is united to the superior powers, thus becoming a partaker of the wisdom and fore-knowledge of those in that sphere of being.

The disciples of Plotinos ascribed to him miraculous perception. They affirmed that he could read

the secret thoughts; Porphyry was contemplating suicide, and he perceived it without having received any outward intimation. A robbery was committed in his house at Rome, and he called the domestics together and pointed out the guilty one. He did not discountenance the popular religious worship; but when one of his friends asked him to attend at the public services, he answered: "It is for the gods to come to me."

Plotinos, Iamblichos, and Apollonios before them, are said to have possessed the powers of prediction and healing. The former art appears to have been cultivated by the Essenes and others in the East. "I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet," said Amos, who seems to have been "irregular;" "but the Lord called me." Apollonios, as his biographer declares, healed the sick, and others, like the *pneumatists* of Asia Minor, performed remarkable cures. It is more than probable that they employed the agency known as animal magnetism. It was usual to exercise it by placing the hand on or near the diseased part, (stroking it and uttering a chant. (*Kings* II., v. II.). It is now fashionable to declaim about these practices as charlatanism; but they appear to have existed in all ages and among different peoples. Plotinos scouted the notion that diseases were daemons, and could be expelled by words; but he indicated temperance and an orderly mode of life as the philosophic way to remove them.

Iamblichos added to the theosophy of his fellows an art which he designated *theurgy*. He taught that the individual might be brought into personal association with spiritual beings, and into the possession of their knowledge, and even possess the power as a divinity to control inferior natures. He was perfectly familiar with the phenomena of the mesmeric trance and clairvoyance, and described them with great exactness, as they are now known to us. "The knowing of the gods is innate," he affirmed; "and it pertains to the very substance of our being. It is su-

perior to judgment and choice, and precedes both reasoning and demonstration. From the beginning it was at one with its source, and was coexistent with the inherent impulses of the soul to the Supreme Goodness." This union is not knowing, but there is a uniform embracing at all points of contact, spontaneous and indistinguishable, as of one thing knowing another, which joins in with the Godhead." (*Mysteries*, I., 3.). The different orders of spiritual beings, he declared, were intermediaries between God and man. Their foreknowledge extends over everything and fills everything capable of receiving it. They also give intimations during our waking hours, and impart to the soul the power of a wider perception of things, the gift of healing, and the faculty of discerning arts and new truths. There are different degrees of this inspiration: sometimes it is possessed in a higher, sometimes in an intermediate, and sometimes only in a lower degree.

Prayer, diligence in the offices of arcane worship, abstemiousness amounting in some instances to asceticism, and contemplation, are the means of discipline required by the theurgist. Iamblichos discourses on these matters with all the earnestness of a modern preacher. "Prayer is by no means an insignificant part of the entire upward path of souls," says Proklos. "Prayers," Iamblichos declares, "constitute the general end to religious worship, and join the sacred art in an indissoluble connection with the divine beings. Unceasing perseverance in them invigorates the higher intellect, makes the reception-chamber of the soul far more spacious for the divinities, opens the arcana of the divine world to human beings, accustoms us to the flashing irradiations of the Supernal Light, and perfects gradually the qualities within us to fitness for the favors of the gods, till it exalts us to the highest excellence." Thus we perceive that the theurgy described and extolled by this philosopher was not any art of sorcery, necromancy or fortune-telling, but a developing of the higher faculties and sentiments. In-

deed, if we change the terms and expressions which he employs to such as are current with us, we would find no difficulty in finding for him a place among the higher thinkers of our own time. Bulwer-Lytton, who appears to have been a thorough student of Neo-Platonism and kindred topics, depicts after a similar manner their operation and influence:

"At last from this dimness, upon some eyes the light broke; but think not that to those over whom the Origin of Evil held a sway, that dawning was vouchsafed. It could be given then, as now, only to the purest ecstasies of imagination and intellect undistracted by the cares of a vulgar life, the appetites of the common clay. Far from descending to the assistance of a fiend, theirs was but the august ambition to approach nearer to the Fount of Good; the more they emancipated themselves from this Limbo of the planets, the more they were penetrated by the splendor and beneficence of God. And if they sought, and at last discovered, how to the eye of the spirit all the subtler modifications of being and matter might be made apparent; if they discovered how, for the wings of the spirit, all space might be annihilated; and while the body stood heavy and solid here, the freed IDEA might wander from star to star: if such discoveries became in truth their own, the sublimest luxury of their knowledge was but this—to wonder, to venerate, and adore!"

We may with this finality very fittingly bring this delineation to a close. But we cannot dismiss the subject without a brief tribute to the noble but unfortunate Hypatia. She bade fair to stand among the most gifted of the Alexandreian school. She had alike for pupils men of every faith, Egyptian, Greek, Christian and Jew; and what little we know of her not only shows her blameless character, but the purity of the doctrines which she taught. In her the Akademeia was almost reincarnated. A few years more added to her career might have rolled back that ocean in which Philosophy and Human Fraternity were engulfed.

Proklos is represented as the most learned and systematic of all the Neo-Platonists. He elaborated the entire theosophy and theurgy of his predecessor into a complete system. Like the Rabbis and Gnostics he cherished a profound reverence for the *Abraxas*, the "Word" or "Venerable Name," and he believed with Iamblichos in the attaining of a divine or magic power which, overcoming the mundane life, rendered the individual an organ of the Divinity,

speaking a wisdom that he did not comprehend, and becoming the utterance of a superior will. He even taught that there were *symbola* or tokens that would enable a person to pass from one order of spiritual beings to another, higher and higher, till he arrived at the absolute Divine. Faith, he inculcated, would make one the possessor of this talisman.

His theology was like that of the others. "There are many inferior divinities," he reiterated from Aristotle, "but one Mover. All that is said concerning the human shape and attributes of these divinities is mere fiction, invented to instruct the common people, and secure their obedience to wholesome laws. The First Principle, however, is neither Fire nor Earth, nor Water, nor anything that is the object of sense. A spiritual Substance is the Cause of the Universe, and the Source of all order, and excellence, all the activity and all the forms that are so much admired in it. All must be led up to this Primal substance which governs in subordination to THE FIRST.

This is the general doctrine of the Ancients, which has happily escaped the wreck of truth amid the rocks of popular error and poetic fables."

The state after death, the metempsychosis or superior life, is thus explained by him: "After death the soul continues in the aerial body till it is entirely purified from all angry and voluptuous passions; then doth it put off by a second dying the aerial body as it did the earthly one. Wherefore, the ancients say that there is a celestial body always joined with the soul, which is immortal, luminous and star-like."

Whatever the demerits of the Neo-Platonic school, there must be general approval by all the right-thinking of the great underlying ideas of Human Brotherhood and perfectibility. Their proper aim was the establishment of the dominion of peace on earth instead of that sovereignty of the sword which in former ages, and in later centuries, arrayed millions of human beings in mortal warfare against each other, and de-

populated whole regions and countries in the name of religion.

As might be expected of persons holding so refined a system of doctrines, their characters corresponded with it admirably. Plotinos was honored everywhere for his probity, Apollonios for his almost preternatural purity of manners, Ammonios for his amiableness, Iamblichos for his piety, and Proklos for his serene temper. The testimony of M. Matter, in his treatise on Gnosticism, is just so far as it relates to these men:

"The morality which the *Gnosis* prescribed for man answered perfectly to his condition. To supply the body with what it needs, and to restrict it in everything superfluous,—to nourish the spirit with whatever can enlighten it, strengthen it, and render it like God, of whom it is an emanation: this is that morality. It is that of Platonism, and it is that of Christianity."

Such is the philosophy, such the religion, which is to the materialists and their allies a stumbling block and folly; to others a divine illumination.

The treasury which the Neo-Platonists filled has enriched the world through all the later ages. The remarkable men who arose as lights to their fellows, were almoners of that bounty. Philosophers and theosophers of every grade were expositors of the Eclectic doctrine: Bœhmen, Swedenborg, as well as Tauler, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling and Henry More were all beneficiaries of the wise men of Alexandria. Hardly a creed exists in the religious world which had not been thus enriched; and literature has derived from that source its choicest embellishments.

Such is the record which these sages made.

ALEXANDER WILDER.

Ch. de H. H. H.

## PLATONISM IN FRANCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

The object of this study is no other than to offer a comprehensive sketch of the Platonic movement in France in the nineteenth century. We shall notice on the one hand the influence, direct and indirect, exerted by the ideas of Plato in the different spheres, artistic, philosophic and social, and on the other give some brief analyses of, and a few quotations from, the principal works inspired by the study of Plato, or devoted to the discussion of his teachings.

### I.

Every one knows with what delight the Renaissance collected all the texts of the great philosopher, brought for the first time into the Occident by Greek exiles: nevertheless France only shared at a distance the enthusiasm of Italy, for she had not a Ficinus, a Bessarion, or a Platonic Academy. Moreover, a contempt of the past is a trait common to all the French philosophical schools from Descartes to the close of the eighteenth century. If the author of the *Discours de la Methode* does break with *eclat* from the middle ages, he is no less unjust with regard to the ancients: however, between his vigorous spirituality and that of Plato the intrinsic analogies are so numerous that it is easy to discover in his school, especially in Malebranche, visible traces of Platonism. During the same age, thanks to the translation of Dacier, incomplete as it was, the students of Philosophy became



acquainted with the most interesting and easily accessible of the Platonic theories.

But other tendencies were destined to prevail, and between the idealism of Plato and the empiricism of Locke and Condillac no bond of sympathy could exist. From the summit of his narrow dogmatism the author of the *Traite des Sensations* passed this scornful sentence on the illustrious metaphysician of Athens: "His opinions appear nothing more than a delirium, which does not merit our attention; this philosopher has retarded the progress of reason."

The same ignorant and presumptuous opinion was expressed by Voltaire, who during his stay in England became a disciple and panegyrist of Locke: "To-day," he writes, "who reads Plato with any attention? Seven or eight dreamers, hidden in the garrets of Europe:" and elsewhere, "From Plato to Locke there is nothing, and a man who knows all of Plato, and nothing but Plato, knows little and knows badly."

The rival of Voltaire, J. J. Rousseau, had probably read and reread certain books of the *Republic* before composing his *Contrat Social*; but, unwilling to share his laurels with anyone, it was with reluctance that he has in this strange work occasionally written the name of Plato. The article Platon in the *Encyclopedia*, signed de Tamourt, is of deplorable mediocrity. There are none in our day who would be willing to thus estimate Plato. However at that time Greek literature was in complete decadence. Erudition was wasted in futile research, without interest, without accuracy, and without depth. The critic of philosophy and literature neglected antiquity, translating it poorly, and above all appreciating it with an inconceivable superficiality.

One book only is an exception, in spite of all which it offers of the false and superficial: it is the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis* (1788). It is a work of fiction, in which the Abbe Barthelemy has given an almost complete picture of the Athenian civilization

in a day immediately succeeding its most brilliant splendor. Plato has his place there, and a place of honor: but at a time when artifice was everywhere so blended with nature that the highest metaphysics itself was obliged to have theatrical decorations.

It is at Cape Sunium, in view of the most extended horizons which find again their pure serenity after the horrors of the tempest, where Plato teaches his disciples his cosmological theories, and tries to make them share his faith in Divine Providence.

Even from a literary point of view, the merit of Plato has been boldly contested. "For the disciple of Socrates order and method are surely not in the number of his qualifications and duties, for his metaphysics and physics, his music, his physiology and his mathematics are all jumbled together pell-mell, everything scattered promiscuously throughout his books, which however does not prevent the reading of them from being agreeable, because he has thrown over all subjects such an astonishing profusion of ideas, mostly at random though, and often even false, but always more or less seducing." Thus has La Harpe expressed himself, in his *Cours de Litterature* (1799); and in another passage he ascribes to the vivacity of Plato's imagination everything which appears to him defective either in the soundness of his philosophic principles or the validity of his reasoning.

But in the domain of philosophy, as elsewhere, a new world succeeded that which the revolution destroyed. When after the mortal shocks of terror France regained possession of herself, she had suffered too much, she had been too profoundly agitated, to return to an artificial life, and the skeptical spirit of the eighteenth century. People were weary of the sophistical philosophy, of the sarcasms of Voltaire, and the negations of atheism. An immense void was at the bottom of all hearts, and if the necessary energy was wanting to return to the austere ideal of the seventeenth century, they at least felt the need of at-

taching themselves again to those beautiful hope with which the author of the *Phaedon* loved to entertain his friends. Lacking religion, they desired a religious philosophy; and what teaching was ever more worthy of this name than that of Plato? Then they were weary of wasting and losing themselves in the tumult of the exterior world. The soul, too long forgotten, and its loftiest aspirations and immortal grandeur ignored and contemned by the Encyclopaedists, reclaimed its rights:\* then, as a recent critic expresses himself, in Plato the theory of the soul is truly the soul of the theory: this is what the philosopher seeks and everywhere discovers,—it is *its* dignity which he means to defend, against all the attractions of pleasure, and the seductions of self-interest. In short, the interior poesy of Platonism was singularly pleasing to those generations which, discontented with the present, and fatigued with reality, gladly dreamed of the unknown, and became intoxicated with the ideal. “All is mystery, and nothing is beautiful but mystery,” exclaimed Chateaubriand. “Then, what philosopher has ever opened to the imagination horizons more infinite than the author of the *Phaedrus* and the *Philebos*? Here, after the boldest speculations, he only claims to have “arrived at the vestibule or entry to the dwelling of the Supreme Good:” there, after an enthusiastic picture of the super-celestial world, he asks pardon “for having detained us so long with the remembrances and regrets for those departed splendors.” If Plato satisfies preeminently the exactions of the soul, which pure reason alone is unable to appease, it is that he is supported not only by the profound, although incomplete revelations of the conscience, but still more by the prophecies, shadowy but sacred of the human heart

Assuredly neither Chateaubriand nor DeMaistre nor DeBonald had deeply studied Plato, but without knowing it they played before their contemporaries

\*Whence the titles chosen by the poets of the new generation: *Meditations*, *Harmonies*, *Rereries*, *Contemplations*, *Intimacies*—words almost unknown to Corneille and Racine.

the same role of moralist and benefactor as did Plato before the Athenians, troubled as well as dazzled by the fallacious promises of the sophists. This was in France like a second Renaissance. Art, which in the eighteenth century was but an imitation of nature, as coarse as it was artificial, hastened to renew itself *par excellence* at the fountain of the ideal.

With purely intellectual visions, joined to moral anticipations, poetry again became "a cry of the soul." It tried again to find the interior sense of being and things; it was as if attracted and captivated by the unknown. The genius, lyrical and religious, of a new generation of inspired bards invented a new language to awaken slumbering enthusiasm; faith, philosophy, liberty, politics, teachings the most ancient as well as most modern, struggled in the face of the sun of talent and ardor. Without allowing himself to be embarrassed by the simplicity, touching and inimitable of the Phædon, Lamartine composed his ode on the *Death of Socrates*;\* and twenty years later Victor de Laprade sang Platon in a poem entitled *Sunium*, drawing upward in his train his disciples, delighted, transported. In a word it was the Platonic spirit, hovering above this marvellous epoch, thus described by E. Caro: "Other periods of this century may have been more glorious for politics or war, but none were ever more distinguished for the growth of ideas, or the advancement of literature. This was an unique age for a liberal and fruitful variety of writers, for all scientific investigations necessary, for all the emotions of the beautiful essential to the almost heroic activity of spirit which was hastening in every direction toward a conquest of the unknown.

The philosophic critic had neither withered these enchanting hopes, nor desolated the vivacious imagination of generations which represented the youth of the century. This was like a universal revival, similar to an *Instauratio Magna* of the human spirit.

\*It is well known that many years before the painter David was inspired at the same fountain to represent "*The Dying Socrates*."

Fortunate days, sublime intoxications, magnanimous work of ideas, long hopes almost realized in anticipation, as if quickened by enthusiastic wishes — all these were not unfruitful." Philosophy more than any other science must experience this happy and vivifying influence. In reality it was in this spiritual renewal that it found for half a century the secret of its grandeur.

Reid and the Scotch school had shown but little sympathy for Platonism. On the one hand it was one of their illusions to imagine that before *then* every one had been entirely ignorant of the existence of the human mind, and on the other their excessive timidity harmonized very poorly with the speculative bravery of Plato. I will merely mention in passing the work of Combes-Doununs: *A Historical Essay on Platon*, and *A Rapid Glance at the History of Platonism, from Platon to our Day*. (Paris, 1809, 2 vols. in 12mo). Not but what it contains many interesting facts on the Athenian philosopher, his life, his virtues, his associations with the celebrated personages of his time: yet unfortunately it is a superficial erudition, expressed in the tender declamatory style of the period, which merely exalts pagan wisdom for the profit of Christianity.

In a far different spirit was compiled the work entitled *Thoughts of Plato On Religion, Morality and Politics*, collected and translated by J. V. LeClerc (Paris, 1819, in 8vo). On the first page we read this strong eulogy: "I love better, wrote Cicero, to deceive myself with Plato than to think rightly with certain other philosophers. What then is this man whose errors are preferable to the truth? Ancient translators have scarcely made him known to the readers of this century. Plato is a veiled deity to even a great number of those who still call him Plato the divine." From his writings I have tried to choose: I have wished to translate that which shows Plato as a man of genius, as theologian, moralist, legislator: those mysterious pages which resemble the leaves of oracles

and which St. Justin believed inspired. . . .

But it is time to return to these noble thoughts which in other days raised to such heights the disciples of Socrates, to these inspirations of genius, to these revelations of the heart, which the wonders of the mind have caused us to forget. . . . By dint of analyzing a point, man has thought no more about the Infinite. Bossuet, Malebranche, and Plato speak to the soul: let us leave the teachers who reason, and abandon ourselves to the sacred prophets who enable the earth to hold converse with the heavens."

I have transcribed these lines because nothing gives a more just idea of the moral prestige which enhanced the value of Platonism, in the opinion of all enlightened minds. It was like an ancient Gospel, for which one willingly abandoned the metaphysical base in order to see only the magnificent coronet. Only a few minds fastened in the paths of Condillacism remained closed to the seduction. Francis Thurot, who had hinted at an acquaintance with ancient philosophy by his teaching in the College of France at Paris, and translated several dialogues, wrote in the preface to his edition of the *Apology of Socrates*:

"The *Phaedon* appears to me filled with so many absurdities that I should fear to place in the hands of youth this jumble of reasoning, each one of which is more vicious than all the others."

More enlightened, in the first edition of his *Histoire Comparee des systimes Philosophiques* (1804) De Gerando inaugurated the movement of reparation, which in our century has restored to Plato his place of honor among the great thinkers of all times. The successive stages in this movement are easily recognized in Laromiguiere, who openly broke with the sensualistic principle in Royer-Collard, who in the decline of his life, to find distraction from keen grief, read and studied in the original text a few of the most celebrated dialogues; in Maine de Biran who, after having long reduced all human nature to will, at length

confessed that intelligence and love had also a place there; in Ballanche the mystic philosopher who, a poet before becoming a metaphysician, always preferred the symbol to the demonstration, the splendor and color of style to the precision of the thought; and in Joubert, the perfect moralist, who has left us this avowal: "If my thoughts which I express could quite independently inscribe themselves upon the trees, the investigators coming to this country after my death would find that in some respects I was more Plato than Plato himself." It is the same writer who gave, in the style of his favorite author, this definition, paradoxical in appearance, but exact enough in reality: "Plato has the evolution of the flight of birds: he makes long circuits; he comprehends much space; he wheels a long time around the point where he wishes to perch, and which he has always in perspective, then at length he alights. . . . In imagining the wake which the bird traces in the air, amusing itself soaring and descending, hovering and circling, we may have an idea of the nature of his mind and style."

In short the new born spirituality, and this was justice, greeted in Plato the first and most illustrious of its ancestors. The pretention and pride of the school was to find again the titles to all the ages of humanity: or in collecting the substance of them, scattered throughout the ancient teachings; or questioning the echo of the old sanctuaries, or in reconstructing piece by piece that eternal Platonism which was the inspiration of all noble philosophies, as well as the soul of all religions.\* However this admiration from afar, which involuntarily recalls the celebrated adage of Tacitus, *major longinquo reverentia*, did not suffice to reinstate in honor a serious study of Plato, his life, his teachings, his method, or his system. But there was one man who for years was capable of taking the intellectual direction of his country and was at the same time anxious to show by

\*Caro, *Philosophy and Philosophers*, Page 5.

his deeds how dear to him the theories and writings of Plato were. An investigation will show that he labored more efficiently for the glory of philosophy than any or all of his contemporaries.

## II.

An illustrious appreciator of genius said one day of Victor Cousin, then an unpretentious pupil in the Normal School, "there is something of Plato in this young man." The event justified the remark: the same elevation of thought, the same flight toward the things of the soul, the same attraction in his words, and above all the same love of the beautiful joined with a constant search after truth!

From the first lectures by Cousin at the Sorbonne the ancient philosophy, too long disdained, and metaphysics exiled for more than a hundred years, saw themselves applauded in *his* person by enthusiastic youth. To him belong the merit and the honor of applying historical criticism,—placed in possession of his positive methods of the origin and grand manifestations of human thought, of having explored its principal sources, explained and followed its various evolutions. But among all the systems there was one to which he gave unceasing fidelity. Platonic idealism, according to M. Janet, was the mode and the center of all his philosophical course.

It is under the patronage of Plato no less than Descartes and Bossuet that he placed spiritualism, revived and renewed. One of the most remarkable books of Madame De Stael suggested to him the plan of visiting Germany. Still young, in this country of vast metaphysical syntheses he was subjected in turn to the influence of Schliermacher, Schelling and Hegel, and if he did not in the end arrive at the rashest conclusions of the transcendental idealism, and the philosophy of the Becoming, his redemption from it was due in a great measure to Plato. I have had good masters, he loved to repeat, but the one the most beloved, the one to whom I have attached myself the most closely, is Plato.



He was destined to repay in a most brilliant manner his debt of gratitude. Obligated in 1821 to leave his professorship, he went into a studious retirement to which his great works did honor. Was this not the time to mature his system, and deliver to the public his thought, after having commented on others? But Cousin preferred to edit Proclus,\* and translate Plato.

The first at least of these two great projects did and must still appear strange. But he whom circumstances had provisionally made a disciple of Schelling and Hegel was evidently attracted rather than repelled by the curious speculations of Neo-platonism, especially when it revived the profoundly religious sentiment, and the tendencies so rigorously spiritual of the founder of the Academy. Proclus whom Cousin recognized as "the prince of eclectic philosophy," Proclus, "reflecting with éclat and exactness all the lights which the genius of the most able masters had thrown into the various ages, reducing to science with consummate art the truths which nature permits us merely to see dimly, or to divine," was represented by his new editor as personifying the summit of the maturity and perfection of the Greek philosophy. It is impossible to conceive of a more flattering eulogy, and to justify it Cousin did not hesitate to write, "it is Proclus who cleared Platonism from the clouds which had enveloped it, and reclothed it in the austere but luminous forms of the faith of Aristotle." We must be permitted to differ from him on this point. But the translation of Plato† now claims our further attention. For the first time the philosopher of

\**Procli opera inedita*, 6 vols., which appeared from 1820 to 1827. The general preface, for the ingenious philosophical and historical insight which it contains and the solid erudition therein unfolded, deserves to be reprinted. Cousin's edition incited more than one important work on the last of the great Platonists: especially worthy of mention is the Doctor's Thesis of Berger, *Proclus: Exposition de sa Doctrine* (1840), and that of Jules Simon: *Du commentaire de Proclus sur le Timée de Platon* (1830).

†Twelve volumes, of which the first five appeared from 1821 to 1830; the six following from 1830 to 1837, the twelfth and last in 1840.

Athens was to find in France an interpreter equal to the nobility of his thought, and the beauty of his diction.

Not that the attempt had not previously been made: for LeRoy in the sixteenth century, and Dacier in the seventeenth, had each given a version of a few dialogues. But the only one of his predecessors whom Cousin utilized was the Jesuit Grou, who in the latter half of the eighteenth century translated successively several of the most important of the Platonic writings, notably the *Republic*, the *Laws*, the *Theaitetos* and the *Philebos*. The resemblance is such in many cases that it seems often merely an occasional change in a word or the termination of a phrase. However, Cousin was aided by numerous collaborators, reserving to himself the revision of their work, before using it; and certain passages in his translation are memorable for their éclat, ardor and a conception wholly his own. Another very appreciable merit of his translation *is*, that it is complete: he conscientiously included in it the most insignificant of the dialogues, and, except the *Alcyon*, even those which are universally admitted to be apocryphal. The *Sophist*, *Politicus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Parmenides*, the *Clitophon*, the *Minos* and the *Charmides*, appeared in French for the first time.

Can it be said that this translation is perfect? Unquestionably no! For competent judges have pointed out more than one manifest error, to say nothing of the inexactness caused for the sake of harmony and elegance. The last volumes especially appear to have been composed by a more heedless hand, and then death surprised the author while he was preparing to give his work a final revision.

As it is this publication had a great and a deserved success. It has reclothed Plato entirely, and rendered easy and agreeable the approach to a Greek philosophy, which heretofore many had confidently praised without ever having turned over the leaves of it.

One thing however surprises and disconcerts the reader: On opening the first volume we are all at once plunged *in medias res*, without preface, introduction or advertisement of any kind. This extraordinary fact demands an explanation. In truth Cousin had prepared for his translation an introductory work designed to answer all the important questions which demanded solution. Here are his own words: "The first volume will serve as an introduction to the entire work, and will contain almost all the important investigations of which Plato is the object. There will be five dissertations, the first on the works of all kind relative to Plato from antiquity to our day; the second on the Life of Plato; the third on the authenticity of his dialogues, the order in which we may suppose they were composed, and in which they may be published to-day; the fourth on the philosophy of Plato taken from his own works; the fifth and last on the history of Platonism throughout all antiquity, and the traces of it which are found in modern history and the contemporaneous schools."

If these plans could have been executed by Cousin with the resources which his vast erudition furnished him, and under the impulse of the attraction which this noble doctrine had for him, his name must have become, in France at least, inseparable from that of the Athenian philosopher.

As it was he failed to carry out his intentions: later on the difficulties of all kinds, the natural results of an authority which circumstances daily increased, at last, in the decline of his life, the fervor with which he was inspired by so many other subjects, these are enough reasons to explain the chasm, without however either softening or weakening our regrets. The first and the second of the two points indicated in the preceding programme were not treated by Cousin, and he only superficially touched the third. The question of the authenticity of several of the relatively important dialogues had been discussed by German critics, with whose works he was acquainted. Cous-

in's disdainful judgment of these criticisms was hardly strong enough to refute them. "Ast and Socher denied the authenticity of this dialogue for want of understanding it." It is very strange that a professed metaphysician should attach the most value to the argument drawn from the form. Thus in his narration, entitled *Promenades philosophiques en Allemagne*, which he published (1857) in the *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, after a witicism against those who denied to Plato the *Laws* with the same assurance that they substitute the Homeridæ for Homer, he says: "What can one say touching the authenticity of the various dialogues of Plato, who is incapable of reading them in Greek, and of feeling the profound difference between the style of the little dialogues attributed to the philosopher and that of the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Timaïos*?" Only the most inferior dialogues attributed to Plato, a Hipparchus or a Minos, ought to be condemned without an appeal to such a criterion. It is certain that the problem of the arrangement of the writings of Plato occupied him more than any other: and this is the manner in which he solved it. In the life of the disciple of Socrates he distinguishes a first period where poesie and religion reign, a second where reason and dialectics triumph, a third where are brought together and reconciled these two opposing tendencies. But let us hear his own explanations: "Oppressed by the grandeur of the objects of his thought the young man lacks the power and the intuitive sense of how to separate himself from them, to calmly speculate them at a distance, to divide in order to comprehend them under all their aspects: and his imagination represents them as it sees them in a cloud or in the twilight of mysticism. Mysticism characterizes the fundamental ideas of all the first efforts of Plato. . . . It is by this sign that great natures are recognized: their cradle is religion: it is there where they are formed, it is there where they treasure up those holy convictions, which alone can sustain them in the trials which they may experience.

From thence they depart, following according to their respective missions material or scientific pursuits. Plato like every great man believed in advancing a first on the faith of irresistible convictions, but not upon reasonings drawn from an investigation of material things of which he neither knew nor could demonstrate. His composition is therefore like his thought, strong, rich and copious, brilliant but without method,—such is his first style."

I do not know if outside of Plato there exists in the history of human thought another example capable of being invoked in support of this theory and even in the case of Plato it is at least questionable. But to proceed: "The second part of the philosopher's life was strongly calculated to develop his genius: for his own sake and for others he should have remembered his faith in the laws and the form of a rigorous demonstration. Mysticism ends the moment reflection begins, for instruments of reflection are not inspiration and enthusiasm, but analysis and dialectics....

The second method represents preeminently the Greek spirit, as the first represents the Oriental.

Who since Aristotle has done anything else than to take possession of the second method of his master, and while perfecting has appropriated it as their own? But all truth, continues Cousin in agreement with Hegel, is in the harmony of contrariety: unite reflection to enthusiasm without destroying it, develop faith by dialectics, and religion by science, then all contradiction is vanquished, and all the needs of human nature are satisfied. Plato did not arrive until late at this summit, after having seen much and travelled much: too self-contained to fall into skepticism, too enlightened to embrace any of the existing systems, there remained nothing left him but to reconcile them."

Thus, "in the first epoch of his life and his genius, simplicity, sublimity, movement and grace predominate as in nature: but we shall seek there in vain,

or at least we cannot find there but in a feeble degree either order, precision or light. On the contrary the second epoch has in an eminent degree these last qualities, but to the detriment of the first. The details are there sacrificed to the whole: order and method are accompanied with a little roughness and dryness, the design is of a perfect precision but the color and life are not there!" Finally, after the *thesis* and the *antithesis* the *synthesis* arrives at its apogee. The genius of Plato both as a philosopher and writer is destined to appear to us in all its fullness and in all its resplendency. "Henceforth by the diversity of the qualities of which it is composed the style of the dialogues represent marvellously the extent and universality to which the thought of Plato attained. Indeed it is very difficult to find anything wanting in his style or in the vast system which he reproduces: everywhere warmth with light, strength united to grace, touches the most delicate and the most profound. The language of Plato, like his thought, reflects the universe."\* Would Plato have unreservedly approved of this brilliant explanation? It is doubtful: the succession as described is too regular not to be rather artificial, and we should find difficulty in drawing from it a definite criterion for the solution of the chronological problem, on account of which it was devised. On this point however Cousin has not varied, for we find him saying in the eleventh edition of his *Histoire generale de philosophie*: "Like Raphael Plato had different epochs according to the development of his thought, and a practiced eye can recognize it;" and in commenting on this idea in the Argument placed at the head of the *Euthydemus* he added: "We cannot admit that it is in the harmony of the subjects that we must seek that of his works. Assuredly there are cases where the choice of the subject indicates already the situation of the soul of the artist,

\*All these quotations are excerpted from a remarkable article published in the *Globe* of Nov. 3d, 1827, which has never been reprinted in the works of Cousin.

and fixes the date of a monument. Nevertheless the subjects are mostly taken from the times, and for reasons quite exterior, and have in general no relation whatever to the degree of the perfection of the talent of the artist. That is precisely the point, to know how to determine the epoch of his development from which the monument in question is brought. How then and where may we apprehend the degree of perfection of a work? Evidently in the manner in which the subject is treated, and not in the subject itself.

This in our opinion is the true principle of the classification of the works of art."

Without even insisting on the obscurity of this exposition we may ask, if perfection thus follows a straight line constantly ascending, what would be the chronology of the plays of Shakespeare or of Corneille? Is any decadence possible, and especially in that which concerns Plato? In the *Laws*, where the discussion is carried sometimes to such a remarkable height, is not the form inferior to that of the *Republic* or of the *Phaidon*?

From the fourth point at any rate of the programme of Cousin I should say that we were led to expect full and entire information about the teachings of Plato.

It belonged to him more than any other in France to have wholly comprehended Plato, to have seized his theories as a whole while discovering the bond either visible or invisible of the parts most diverse, and to bring out the grand and beautiful unity of a philosophy where so many prejudiced minds have refused to recognize a system. But, alas! here too Cousin offers us only fragments. There are at first the Arguments which following the example of Schleiermacher he prefixed to most of the dialogues, of which it has been said that they were as much historical and metaphysical dissertations, as worthy of those great subjects, as they were learned prefaces and eloquent commentaries. Unfortunately the task

was interrupted, and remained unfinished.

Either the perseverance or the leisure was wanting to Cousin to appreciate not only some of the secondary dialogues, like the *Menon* and the *Cratylus*, or those since then contested in Germany as the *Sophist*, the *Politikos* and the *Pärmenides*, but some compositions as important and as thoroughly Platonic as the *Republic*, the *Timaios* the *Phaidros* or the *Banquet*. Besides as compared with the summaries of Ficinus and Tiedemann as dry as they are mediocre, these outlines of Cousin offer us an exposition of the thought of Plato more animated, more original and more akin to our modern turn of mind, but we must acknowledge that many times the dialogue considered has served as a pretext to set forth some personal theories a few of which at least must have been considered singularly bold. This in the hands of Cousin was a powerful means of action in favor of his own spiritualism, at this time strongly impregnated with the genius of Germany. Cousin, says M. Janet, is Plato translating Hegel into the language of the imagination and of enthusiasm.

Thus, to extend the new interpretation, the *ἀνάμνησις* contained all the doctrine of pure reason, and of its absolute origin: the *Euthyphron* developed in veiled words the programme of what they call in our day "independent morality": the *Phaidon* substituted for the immortality of substance personal immortality; the *Theaitetos* makes of the conscience the source of the idea of the infinite and absolute: the *Little Hippias* affirms the complete liberty of moral inspiration: the *First Alcibiades* goes so far as to teach that the *me*, while itself thinking itself would think God, etc. Where the interpretation was less rash it was still so bold that Hegel was impelled to write to the author: "Not being satisfied with that which you have found in such or such a dialogue, you can supply what is wanting by following out the train of thinking." In the course of his arguments Cousin cites three special articles inserted in



his *Fragments de philosophie ancienne*, under the following titles: *Langue de la theorie des idees—Antecedents du Phedre—Examen d' un passage du Menon*. For the sake of brevity we shall only speak of the second, of which this is the beginning: "Nothing would be more precious than to know well the antecedent of Plato, and to know precisely what he owed to his predecessors. And if it is too much of an undertaking to attempt to comprehend Plato and his numerous works, we should still obtain an important result if we limit ourselves to the analysis of even one single dialogue." Cousin was not mistaken in discovering in the Phaidros in connection with Socratic influence elements Orphic and Pythagorean: but with Schleiermacher he believed that this was in the chronological order the first Platonic writing; a strange error which could not fail to affect his conclusions.

It is very surprising if Cousin, in studying Plato has no where sounded the depths of the system of the philosopher. He has at all events however analyzed with love the marvellous talent of the writer. This the following passage taken from his preface to the *Lysis* shows: "We cannot believe that these opinions stated and refuted by Plato, one after the other, are merely the gambols of the intellect. No they are the views real and historical, professed by the great schools either anterior or contemporary, except that in Plato they are illuminated in their principles, strengthened in their exposition and pushed to severity in their deductions: that is to say, elevated in their ideal, and consequently not in the manner of seeing particulars proper to such or such contemporaries of Socrates, but theories general and fundamental, and as the classic types of all analogous systems throughout the ages. Such a polemic belongs no longer to Greece and history, but to the human mind and philosophy. This is the reason that the dialogues of Plato are immortal, that they soar above all centuries, entering into all discussions, however near or remote."

One last paragraph will serve us to sum up all the admiration which Cousin had for the great philosopher: "Plato is not only the first who attempted to escape from the spirit of system and command all the particular points of view, but he has had the supreme honor of never having crossed the limits of common sense to plunge into the abysses."

Be not surprised at such an eulogy, for nothing ought to be spared to show in Plato the perfect model, as well as the first apostle of eclecticism. As to the history of Platonism announced by Cousin, it was still to be written. Among the eminent minds grouped around him none thought of appropriating to himself the admirable programme outlined in 1820 by the master. Whether works of this kind are on the whole more rare in France than elsewhere, or whether the French genius is poorly fitted to grapple with the bold hypotheses and adventurous generalizations which professed to explain and understand all things, we are destined to see multiplied by preference treatises discussing the various and complex aspects of the Platonic problem.

Certainly it is not with impunity that the chief of a school of the character of Cousin celebrated under all circumstances the unequalled genius of the founder of the Academy. It is not with impunity that in publishing a complete translation of his admirable writings, he threw into the great current of the thought of the centuries a flood of ideas, heretofore wholly unknown. The seed have been scattered with a full hand; we are going to see the budding and blossoming of the harvest.\*

C. HUIT.

*To be continued.*

\*Translated by Mrs. Julia P. Stevens.



## MISCELLANEA.

### A GEOMETRICAL PROBLEM.

Plato Divine, Fair Science taught,  
To help and prove the power of thought;  
To keep men from the Tempting Bowl  
And Idleness, that hurts the Soul:  
Thus in his bowers the Gentle Sage  
To Virtue train'd the rising age;  
And *Athens* first in Arts and Fame  
Immortaliz'd his well-known name.  
But since she now is learned no more,  
And Science glads the British shore  
O that she'd waft a Plato o'er!  
Let us, though little's in our power;  
Strive to improve each leisure hour;  
For reasoning just to light oft brings  
Before unthought-of, useful things.  
Kind Artists then declare I pray,  
How a right line be drawn there may  
From vertex of hyperbola  
That, meeting with its curve direction,  
Shall form the bluntest intersection.

—MISCELLANEA MATHEMATICA (London, 1775).

### QUAESTIONES PLATONICAE.

(1). Crenzer in the *Prooemium* to his edition of Proklos' *Στοιχείωσις θεολογική*, Franc., 1822, says (p. XI): "Nam quod nuper quidam si Diis placet philosophus recentiorum Platoniorum de philosophia libros in Babyloniam Indiamque remitti jussit; videat, ne a sanis hominibus ipse Anticyram mittatur." To what philosopher does he refer?

(2). Inter prudentissimos Graecorum natum est proverbium, Platonem habuisse tres oculos, unum quo humana, alium quo naturalia, alium quo divina suspiceret, qui in fronte esset, cum alii sub fronte fuerint.—Ficini Opera, Tom. II. p. 1223. What ancient author quotes this saying or proverb?



Gp 83.882  
The later Platonist.  
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